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ABSTRACT

Seeking to evaluate the impact of three summer workshops to improve the teaching of writing at all school levels, the sponsors of the workshops (Georgia State University/Southeast Center for the Teaching of Writing) used both a telephone survey of half the people attending two of the workshops and four pretest-posttest instruments. The instruments were the Attitude and Knowledge in Written Composition from the battery of Illinois Tests on the Teaching of English, the Language Inquiry, the Philosophy of Composition, and participants' writing samples. A preliminary analysis of the evaluation data indicated the summer writing workshops had a positive impact on the participants. Results of the subjective analyses of the participants' philosophies of composition and the telephone interviews appeared to correlate positively with the results of the two objective measures--the Attitude and Knowledge in Written Composition and the Language Inquiry. It appeared that, following participation in the summer workshops, the teachers either acquired or increased their process orientation toward teaching writing and adapted methods in their classrooms that were compatible with this approach. (RL)

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IMPACT OF GSU/SCTW SUMMER WRITING WORKSHOPS: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Carolyn Boiarsky/Allan Spanjer/Eunice Sims

For three successive summers, Georgia State University/Southeast Center for the Teaching of Writing (GSU/SCTW) has sponsored workshops for teachers of all levels--elementary through college--to improve the teaching of writing in the schools. What impact have these workshops had on the participants who attended?

Using a variety of assessment measures, GSU/SCTW has attempted to evaluate both the cognitive and affective results of the project to provide answers to the following questions:

- Do teachers change their knowledge of and attitude toward teaching writing?
- Do teachers improve their own writing skills?
- Do teachers implement the new methods and techniques they learned back in the classroom?

A preliminary analysis of the evaluation data indicates the summer writing workshops had a positive impact on the p rticipants.

GSU/SCTW is a satellite of the University of California, Berkeley/Bay Area Writing Project (UCB/BAWP) and a member of the National Writing Project (NWP). Workshops were held at Georgia State University during the summers of 1978, 1979, and 1980. A total of 79 teachers from metropolitan Atlanta schools and colleges attended these workshops.

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Because of the pubescent state of the art in evaluating writing and the teaching of writing, the assessment measures selected by GSU/SCTW only approximated those needed to evaluate changes in the participants' attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Various measures were used. Some were objective, others subjective. All these measures except the telephone interview, which was a post measure only, were administered before and after the workshop. They included the following:

1. Attitude and Knowledge in Written Composition--a measure of attitude toward and approach in teaching composition from the battery of "Illinois Tests on the Teaching of English";
2. Language Inquiry--a measure of existing concepts and attitudes toward language;
3. Philosophy of Composition--a measure of philosophical principles underlying the teaching of writing as held by a given teacher;
4. Writing Samples--a measure of the teachers' expository and creative writing performance; and
5. Telephone Interview--a post-only measure of teachers' perceptions of the impact of the summer writing workshop on classroom practice, staff development, and their own writing.

Attitude and Knowledge in Written Composition

Parts I and II of this test are based on two hypothetical English teachers who have fundamentally different philosophies for teaching composition. Scoring of the test determines which of the two teachers the test-taker more nearly resembles in terms of attitude toward and approach in teaching composition. The Test Administrator's Manual describes the two hypothetical teachers as follows.

> Teacher X . . . tends to emphasize the structure of discourse and the rhetorical characteristics. His course of instruction is frequently built around the modes of discourse--narration, exposition,

description, and argumentation--and he treats these in order. He is likely to emphasize the structure of the paragraph, giving students instruction in paragraph form (topic sentence, body, concluding sentence) and supplying practice in paragraph patterns (comparison and contrast, details, particular to the general, and so forth). His composition assignments usually emphasize exposition and argumentation, calling for students to deal with abstract problems, literary analysis, and the like. This teacher feels that theme evaluation and revision are an important part of the writing process. After the student has written a draft, the teacher will show him his weaknesses in content and structure and allow him to correct these through revision. His basic theory, then, is that the student learns to write by being taught the characteristics of good writing, and then practicing until he achieves them in his own writing.

Teacher Y . . . tends to emphasize the process of composing in his instruction. He believes that writing is "learned" rather than "taught," that a student's power over language grows as he has meaningful experiences communicating his ideas to others. This teacher's assignments are likely to grow out of the student's own experiences, and the writing will tend to be personal rather than expository or academic. This teacher emphasizes the invention stage of composition, and much of his instruction will center on helping students find ideas and materials for their papers. This teacher is not likely to spend much time on paragraph structure and theoretical concepts like unity, coherence, and emphasis. He does not stress evaluation and revision of compositions, and he prefers to respond to the student's ideas. He may encourage the students to read and discuss each other's act of composing, rather than the qualities of prose. He is not especially concerned with correctness, and doubts that revision is a useful teaching device.

Because the test is criterion-referenced, the scores do not invite rankings and comparisons. Thus, no national or regional norms are established. Scores for respondents' answers to the test items are weighted either X or Y. The totals of X and Y points indicate how closely the respondent resembles the profiles. The manual suggests "a score of 69-X, 9-Y would indicate a teacher who is quite like Teacher X." A score of 24-X, 28-Y would signify a teacher who places some emphasis on the process of composing, but also values the teaching of structure.

For purposes of analysis, a discrepancy score between the X and Y scores on both the pretests and posttests was calculated for each participant. For example, a participant scoring 27-X and 34-Y would have a discrepancy score of +7, while a participant scoring 34-X and 27-Y would have a discrepancy score

of -7. The total discrepancy score for all participants, divided by the number of participants, equalled the group's mean discrepancy score.

The focus of the summer workshop is on the writing processes. An average of 75% of all participants who entered the three workshops scored higher Y than X on the pretest, indicating they were already oriented toward a process approach to teaching composition. It is expected that after completing the workshop the participants will have increased their resemblance to Teacher Y and be even more process oriented. For the most part, the test data support this expectation; overall, there was an increased emphasis on process in the participants' attitude toward and approach in teaching composition.

During the first summer (1978), 21 of the 24 participants scored higher Y than X on the pretest. However, posttest data on this group revealed that only 17 of the 24 participants scored higher Y than X, resulting in a net loss of 4 participants from the Y position after completion of the workshop (see Table 1).

Table 1

Number of Participants Scoring Higher Y than X on Attitude and Knowledge in Written Composition

	'78 Group	'79 Group	'80 Group	Totals
Number of participants	24	40	15	79
Participants scoring higher Y than X on the pretest	21 (88%)	26 (65%)	13 (87%)	60 (76%)
Participants scoring higher Y than X on the posttest	17 (71%)	34 (85%)	14 (93%)	65 (82%)
Net number and percentage of change of participants	-4 (-17%)	8 (20%)	1 (6%)	5 (6%)

These data also showed that 11 of the 24 participants (46%) increased their individual Y scores on the posttest, even though overall some were lost to the Teacher X position (see Table 2).

Table 2

Number of Participants Increasing Their Posttest Y Scores on Attitude and Knowledge in Written Composition

	'78 Group	'79 Group	'80 Group	Totals
Number of participants	24	40	15	79
Participants increasing their Y scores on the posttest	11 (46%)	30 (75%)	11 (73%)	52 (66%)

A mean discrepancy of 15 between the X and Y scores on the pretest was also calculated for this group. On the posttest, the mean discrepancy score was 11. Consequently, it appears the group as a whole became more structured in their attitude toward and approach in teaching composition after participation in the writing workshop (see Table 3).

Table 3

Pre/Post Mean Discrepancy Scores on Attitude and Knowledge in Written Composition

	'78 Group	'79 Group	'80 Group	Totals
Number of participants	24	40	15	79
Group's mean discrepancy score between X and Y on pretest	15	6	18	11
Group's mean discrepancy score between X and Y on posttest	11	17	25	17
Net change in discrepancy score	-4	11	7	6

In the summer of 1979, 40 students participated in the workshop. On the pretest, 26 of 40 scored higher Y than X. On the posttest that number increased

to 34, resulting in a net gain of 8 participants who showed Y rather than X tendencies after the workshop. Overall, 30 of the 40 participants increased their Y scores on the posttest, meaning that 75% of the participants were more process oriented in their attitude toward and approach in teaching composition after the workshop.

The mean discrepancy score on the pretest for the '79 group was 6. On the posttest the mean discrepancy score was 17, resulting in a mean net change of +11 points from pretest to posttest. Unlike the 1978 group, the 1979 group became more process oriented in their attitude toward and approach to teaching composition after completing the summer writing workshop.

In the summer of 1980, 15 teachers participated in the writing workshop. On the pretest, 13 of 15 scored higher Y than X. On the posttest, 14 of 15 scored higher Y than X, resulting in a net gain of 1 participant to the process position. On the pretest, the mean discrepancy score was 18; on the posttest it was 25, resulting in a mean net change of +7, again indicating an increase in the participants' orientation toward process. Overall, 11 of 15 increased their Y scores on the posttest. About 73% of the participants were influenced to become more process oriented in their teaching of composition.

These data indicate a trend toward increased emphasis on process as the participants' attitudes toward and approach in teaching composition. As shown in Table 1, the summer writing workshops, among other variables, favorably influenced 66% of the participants in a direction congruent with the purpose of the program.

Language Inquiry

This test is designed to reflect the test taker's concepts and attitudes toward language. Eighteen areas of language are treated, including dialect, grammatical form, syntax, style, vocabulary, and language usage (2). Participants'

responses to this measure are evaluated in terms of whether or not they are congruent with the responses of linguists. It is expected that after completing the workshop the participants' linguistic attitudes will be more congruent with the opinions held by the linguists. The test data support this expectation, with posttest scores showing substantial gains over pretest scores for all three summer groups.

Means and mean differences were computed on the Language Inquiry for each summer group. These data are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Pre/Post Means and Mean Differences for Language Inquiry

	'78 Group	'79 Group	'80 Group	Totals
Number of participants	23*	40	15	78
Pretest mean	45.74	43.68	40.73	43.72
Posttest mean	51.17	53.53	51.80	52.50
Mean difference	+5.43	+9.85	+11.07	+8.78

*one score missing

As the above data reveal, the mean difference between pretest and posttest scores increased for all groups, with the 1980 summer workshop participants showing the greatest increase with a mean difference of +11.07. Overall, the three summer groups combined showed an increase of 8.78 from pretest to posttest.

Using these same pre-post data, an analysis was also made by grade levels. The participants represented four grade levels--elementary, middle school, secondary, and postsecondary. These data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Pre/Post Means and Mean Differences by Grade Levels for Language Inquiry

	Elementary	Middle	Secondary	Postsecondary
Number of participants	28	9	30	11
Pretest mean	40.54	44.11	42.90	53.73
Posttest mean	47.54	52.22	54.67	59.46
Mean difference	+7.00	+8.11	+11.77	+5.73

These data show the secondary school participants achieved the greatest gain from pretest to posttest, with a mean difference of +11.77. Postsecondary participants realized the smallest gain (5.73) from pretest to posttest, but this group also had the highest pretest and posttest means of 53.73 and 59.46, respectively.

Although an analysis of these data for statistical significance has not yet been made, the preliminary results show that the summer workshops did have an impact on the linguistic behavior of the participants as measured by the Language Inquiry. The participants changed their concepts and attitudes toward language and, consequently, became more informed and attitudinally consistent with the opinions held by linguists.

Philosophy of Composition

In addition to the objective tests, the Center performed a subjective, content analysis on the participants' pre and post philosophy of composition essays. These were written one month prior to the teachers' participation in the workshop and one month after their completion of the workshop, respectively. It was expected that the post papers would reflect a change in attitude and would

incorporate new methods not mentioned in the preworkshop papers. Postworkshop papers for all three groups supported this hypothesis. In general, the original (preworkshop) papers for all three years espoused the traditional concepts of teaching writing. Participants believed that the atmosphere of the composition class was extremely important, that teachers needed to give praise and be accepting. In addition, there was a consistent concentration on teaching grammar, mechanics, and organization. The final papers indicated an expansion rather than a change in the teachers' philosophies. Many methods, which have gained recognition during the past decade, were mentioned in these postworkshop papers. The teachers included a recognition of the use of small groups for peer evaluation and an understanding of the need to help students engage in all three phases of the writing process--prewriting, drafting, and revising. While these two aspects of teaching writing had been mentioned in few of the preworkshop papers, they were mentioned in almost all of the postworkshop papers.

Participants' postworkshop papers also indicated a belief in the need to help students improve their fluency--a skill hardly mentioned in their preworkshop papers. They also indicated more concern with integrating writing with the language arts--listening, speaking, and reading--and with the other content areas. Again, this concept of integration was almost entirely omitted from their original essays.

While these methods indicate additions to the teachers' preworkshop philosophies, there was a definite change in the postworkshop philosophies regarding the teaching of grammar. The participants' later philosophies indicated a shift toward teaching grammar from a student's own writing and away from teaching it in an isolated context from a textbook.

The following excerpt from one of the participants' papers indicates the kinds of changes which occurred in the teachers' philosophies after the workshop.

> My method of teaching writing has always been structured. My work habits and experiences during this past summer have forced me to re-examine some of my teaching. I have never had my students do free writing or any creative writing, and I am anxious to use both of them this quarter. Sentence-combining and slot sentences will help me teach the skills. I shall use group processing with all of my students rather than just the more advanced ones I intend to alter my methods of teaching a great deal.

Writing Samples

In addition to examining teachers' knowledge and attitudes concerning the teaching of writing, the Center was interested in finding out what effects the workshop had on the teachers' own writing. It was expected that teachers' own writing would improve. Two modes of discourse were analyzed--expository and imaginative.

An examination of the philosophy of composition papers provided evidence of changes in expository writing. These samples were analyzed for organization, syntactic maturity, and creative imagery. Improvements in the expository writing samples are indicated for all three groups. An analysis of the preworkshop papers indicated that upper grade level teachers wrote with excellent organization but little imagery, while elementary teachers displayed some originality but comparatively little organization or depth. The postworkshop papers indicated that upper level teachers were incorporating lively, original images into their papers while the elementary teachers had gained a more sophisticated style, using mature organization, varied sentence structure, and vital word choices (Sims, 1980).

In contrast to the results of the postworkshop expository writing samples, the only postworkshop creative writing samples to show improvement were those belonging to the third group (1980). The creative writing samples were analyzed for creative imagery, word choices, attention to detail, and syntactic rhythms.

The first summer, participants wrote their creative writing samples on the first and last days of the workshop. They were asked to "Describe a place, real

or imaginary, where would rather be right now." A subjective analysis by three staff members indicated that the post papers contained less creative imagery, fewer details, and more choppy sentences than the original samples.

During the second summer, the participants wrote samples following the same procedure as they had on the previous summer, but the topic was changed. This time, participants were asked to "Imagine that you are an inanimate object and describe the way you feel about being that object--if your life is pleasant or unpleasant, if people are kind to you or wretched--and what sort of experiences you have."

An analysis of the post papers for this summer indicated that, while the pieces were not less imaginative than the original ones, neither did they show any improvement.

During the third summer, the staff made one additional change. The topic was retained but the testing procedure was altered slightly. Instead of requiring the participants to write the final sample on the last day of the workshop, when they were also engaged in taking two other posttests, the participants were asked to write the sample one day before the final day. The writing was assigned as one of the various exercises in which the participants routinely engaged throughout the course of the summer. For the first time, these post samples showed a definite improvement over the original samples. The procedure will need to be repeated to determine if this improvement is maintained and if, in fact, the time factor was a key variable.

The following two samples provide an indication of the kinds of changes that were noted in the third group's postworkshop papers.

Sue opens her original paper as a pair of running shoes, with "I am the constant companion of my owner. I live and go everywhere with her except to the shower and to go to bed (sic)." Her post paper in which she becomes a walking

stick begins: "The old woman is at it again. Lord, how much is one supposed to take from her. If she has insulted me once, she has done it a hundred times. Yet, out of the goodness of my heart, I help her walk." The post sample uses an emotional tone, lacking in the first. It also includes an excellent image, "wooden heart." The syntax is more mature with increased embeddings, and there are no grammatical errors as there were in the first.

In the second sample, Ellen begins her original sample with "I am satisfied with my life, not only do I provide a great deal of pleasure from people who read but I am treated quite well." Her post paper, in which she assumes the role of a cigarette, begins: "I respond to touch. Soft fingers, gently caressing me, produce a sort of mental telepathy, a communication of the spirit and the psyche. I often feel like a priest at the confessional, for I am able to extract from people their deepest secrets, their achievements, their failures and their miseries." She has increased the use of modifiers and, thus, is more descriptive. Like Sue, Ellen incorporates new images; the metaphor of the priest is a unique description. Her syntax, too, is more complex, using adjectival phrases, and she demonstrates a sensitivity to syntactical rhythm in the final sentence.

Telephone Interview

Another aspect of the workshop which was examined was concerned with the participants' behavior once they returned to the classroom. The Center developed a series of questions and, during the spring of 1980, conducted telephone interviews with a 50% random sample of participants who had attended the 1978 and 1979 summer workshops. Information was collected in five specific areas: (1) classroom practices acquired in the workshop which participants were using to teach writing; (2) participants' interest in engaging in writing themselves; (3) administrative support for participants' activities and classroom practices; (4) extent of participants' involvement in providing staff development programs in

teaching writing in their own schools and systems; and (5) participants' perceptions of future needs for continuing to improve in teaching writing. It was expected that teachers would implement a wide variety of new practices which are indicative of a process orientation toward teaching writing and which are stressed implicitly in the workshop. These practices include group processing of student papers, activities for increasing writing fluency, and the engagement of students in all three phases of the writing process including rev'sion, the phase most often omitted from traditional teaching methods. It was also expected that each participant would conduct three 90-minute staff development wor'shops for a total of 4-1/2 hours and that they would continue to engage in their own writing. An analysis of the participants' responses indicate that many of these expectations have been realized. In addition, the responses indicate administrative support for the teachers' activities and practices.

Participants reported implementing a wide variety of the methods and activities demonstrated during the summer workshop in their classrooms. Group processing/peer evaluation--the use of small groups of students to read and provide critical evaluation of their peers' papers--was the most frequently reported technique adopted from the summer program. Revision, which can be a direct result of such group work, followed closely as an activity which the teachers had initiated as a result of their summer experiences. Three techniques aimed at improving students' fluency--freewriting, journals, and assignments in the expressive mode--were also among those included most often in the lists of activities adapted by the participants to fit their own classroom needs. New methods for teaching grammar and usage, such as games, slot sentences, sentence combining, and lessons derived from students' own writing, also ranked high.

The following list provides the ten methods and activities which participants reported implementing most often in their classrooms:

1. group processing/peer evaluation;
2. journal writing;

3. revision;
4. expressive writing;
5. free writing;
6. teachers' writing with their students;
7. observational writing;
8. new methods for teaching grammar and usage (lessons from students' own papers, sentence combining, slot sentences, games);
9. writing in the content areas; and
10. using literary forms as models for written discourse.

Teachers' responses indicated they have not only implemented a large number of new methods and activities in teaching writing in their classrooms as a result of the workshop, but they have also continued to be involved in their own writing activities. Eighty percent of those interviewed responded that they are continuing to engage in some form of writing themselves. Two have continued to work on a novel, several have submitted short stories for publication, and one has published an article in a professional journal; but most commented they are simply writing for their own pleasure, in personal journals, or writing with their students.

Participants' responses to the next question, concerning support from administrators, often considered the gatekeepers to educational change, indicated excellent support on the part of lead teachers on the elementary level, department chairpersons on the secondary and postsecondary levels, and principals at all levels. Only two teachers, less than 5% of those interviewed, reported no support.

Administrative support included support for staff development programs in teaching writing. Over the two-year period, teachers conducted a total of 63 staff development workshops, an average of one workshop per participant. The programs reached approximately 1,300 teachers. It is esimated that each teacher reached approximately 20 teachers, suggesting a ripple effect ratio of 1:20. While most teachers held only one 90-minute program, which fell below the projected total of three, several offered a series of programs ranging from 6 to 50 hours, thus far exceeding the expected number of contact hours. In addition, the types of staff development programs varied, with one half of the respondents conducting formal workshops, while the other half offered assistance on an informal basis to teachers on their staff.

In response to the final concern, almost all participants responded that they would welcome additional opportunities to get together with other teachers to share ideas about teaching writing in a fashion similar to that used during the summer workshops.

Conclusion

Results of the subjective analyses of the participants' philosophies of composition and the telephone interviews appear to correlate positively with the results of the two objective measures--the Illinois Attitude and Knowledge of Written Composition and the Language Inquiry. It appears that, following their participation in the summer workshops, teachers either acquire or increase a process orientation toward teaching writing and adapt methods in their classrooms which are compatible with this approach. These results seem to indicate that the summer workshops have had a positive impact on teachers' philosophies and practices in teaching writing.

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